



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Official Business



David E. Obey

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**POSTAL PATRON — LOCAL
7th CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT
WISCONSIN**

DAVE OBEY & WISCONSIN PRIORITIES

EDUCATION

Every parent in America has the right to know that when he or she goes to work, their children will be taught by well trained teachers in decent schools equipped with modern technology in classrooms small and orderly enough to allow teachers to give students the attention they need to succeed. Many of you have told me that education is your number one priority. As the highest ranking Minority Member of the Appropriations Committee, I share that priority. And, as one of the key negotiators on the education budget I will be pushing for the following education initiatives this year:

TEACHER TRAINING: The most important element in a decent education is well trained teachers. One out of 10 teachers don't teach the subject they were trained to teach. And four out of five don't feel prepared to give students the kind of skills they need. That is why we need a strong effort to upgrade teacher training to make sure every classroom has a first rate instructor.

SMALLER CLASS SIZES: To make classes more manageable and create a better learning atmosphere, we are pushing to put an additional 100,000 teachers in classrooms around the country to improve student performance.

SAFE SCHOOLS: Too many of our schools are broken down and in need of repair. It is imperative that we make our schools safe and equip them to handle 21st century technology.

MODERN TECHNOLOGY: The computer has changed the way our country works. Every school needs to be equipped with modern computer technology so students can feel comfortable using these kinds of tools.

SPECIAL EDUCATION: The federal government has told local schools they must promise to give all children a good education, including those with learning disabilities. It should also help those schools meet that obligation so less of the burden falls on our local taxpayers.

FAMILY INVOLVEMENT: Children are much more successful in schools when teachers and parents work together to provide the personal attention and discipline needed to fulfill high expectations for student performance. The federal government cannot control that but it can help to familiarize local school districts with research that helps show how schools can get parents more involved in their students education.



Congressman Obey, who is the highest ranking Minority Member the Labor, Health and Human Services and Education Appropriations Committee and Congressman John Porter, the Chairman of that committee, watch along with Vice President Al Gore, Labor Secretary Alexis Herman and Education Secretary Richard Riley as the President signs the Education Appropriations Bill.

FIGHTING FOR FAIRNESS IN PRESCRIPTION DRUG PRICING

The rising cost of prescription drugs is quickly becoming one of the biggest problems faced by seniors in this country. In my travels around the 7th district, many seniors have told me that they pay up to \$6,000 a year for prescription medication. Some have to choose between paying for prescription

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Prescription Drugs Continued . . .

drugs and paying their heating and grocery bills and that is not right. This is not just a problem for seniors: It is also a problem for their sons and daughters who are trying to raise their own families and worry about their parents health bills.

Two studies I had commissioned last year on prescription drug prices for seniors in the 7th district illustrate just how big the problem is. **The first study showed that seniors in the 7th district pay almost twice as much for prescription drugs than drug companies favorite customers like large HMO's and the Veteran's Administration.**

The second showed that Seniors in the 7th district pay 81% more for prescription drugs than consumers in Mexico or Canada.

**PRESCRIPTION
DRUGS UNDER
MEDICARE**

That's why, I am pushing to include a prescription drug benefit under Medicare for every senior. I am also pushing for legislation which would require prescription drug companies to give Medicare recipients the same price for prescription drugs that they give to their favorite customers like large HMO's and government health plans.

Prescription Drug	U.S. Dosage and Form	Canadian Price	Mexican Price	7th District Price	Canada-7th District Price Differential		Mexico-7th District Price Differential	
					Percent	Dollar	Percent	Dollar
Zocor	5 mg, 60 tab.	\$ 46.17	\$ 67.65	\$102.79	123%	\$56.62	52%	\$35.14
Prilosec	20 mg, 30 cap.	\$ 55.10	\$ 32.10	\$114.69	108%	\$59.59	25%	\$82.59
Procardia XL	30 mg, 100 tab.	\$ 74.25	\$ 76.60	\$132.42	78%	\$58.17	73%	\$55.82
Zoloft	50 mg, 100 tab.	\$129.05	\$219.35	\$216.48	68%	\$87.43	-1%	\$-2.87
Norvasc	5 mg, 90 tab.	\$ 89.91	\$ 99.32	\$114.87	28%	\$24.96	16%	\$15.55
Average Differential					81%		79%	

Study shows that consumers in Mexico and Canada pay 81% less for the top five most used prescription drugs than seniors in the 7th district.

Prescription	Manufacturer	Use	Prices For Favored Customers	Prices For Seniors	Differential For Senior Citizens	
					Percent	Dollar
Zocor	Merck	Cholesterol	\$ 27.00	\$102.79	281%	\$ 75.79
Prilosec	Astra/Merck	Ulcers	\$ 59.10	\$114.69	94%	\$ 55.59
Procardia XL	Pfizer Inc.	Heart Problems	\$ 68.35	\$132.42	94%	\$ 64.07
Norvasc	Pfizer Inc.	High Blood	\$ 59.71	\$114.87	92%	\$ 55.16
Zoloft	Pfizer Inc.	Depression	\$115.70	\$216.48	87%	\$100.78
Average Price Differential					130%	

Chart compares what seniors in the 7th district pay for the top five most used prescription drugs to what prescription drug companies favorite customers like large HMO's and the Veterans's pay for prescription drugs.



Congressman Obey meets with seniors from the Wausau area to talk about the challenges they face in paying for prescription drugs.

As this newsletter is being written, both issues are pending in the House and face heavy resistance. I hope by the time the budget is passed in October, the problem will be fixed on both fronts.

BUDGET AND TAX PRIORITIES

At the same time we make needed investments in education and health care, we also need to bring down the debt. There is nothing wrong with giving tax cuts to people who need them the most—hard working families. But the Republican tax package making its way through Congress right now is so large that it threatens our ability to pay down the debt and still meet our obligations to Social Security, Medicare, education, health care, environmental protection and scientific research.

The education initiatives that we are pushing could be paid for by simply reducing the Republican tax package by 20%. And certainly we should not be providing \$90 billion worth of tax cuts for people who make more than \$300,000 a year before we provide help for seniors to pay their prescription drug costs. We need a balanced budget and balanced priorities at the same time in order to both help people who need it and make the investments in education and science that will keep this economy rolling.

Sincerely,

David L. Obey